

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace paragraph [0031], with the following amended paragraph:

[0031] The IDLE character of IDLE/SYNC packets may be used to keep data receiver 360 aligned in the boundaries of the FEC data frame sub-packets 410. The following example illustrates one technique by which the IDLE/SYNC packet may be used to maintain data alignment. Channel SYNC decoder 355 may contain two control signals, IDLE detect and IDLE status (not shown). The IDLE detect signal indicates when each IDLE signal has been detected by channel SYNC decoder 355. The IDLE status signal indicates when an IDLE character has been found by channel SYNC decoder 355 in an unexpected or incorrect location in the received data stream. Using these signals and a counter (also not shown), it is possible to determine that data has lost synchronization with the clock signal or that data have been lost or misaligned. Assuming the system is sending error free packets as shown in FIG. 4, the IDLE detect signal will be asserted every 17 ~~packets~~ double words received. If the IDLE detect signal is not asserted, one or more bits or bytes has been lost or a transmission error has occurred. Similarly, if the IDLE status signal is asserted, this also may indicate that one or more bits or bytes has been lost or corrupted. If either of these things happen, the received data is not written to memory. The system will wait until the next valid IDLE character is received.